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May 16, 1974

Mr. Irv Drasnin
CBS News
524 West 57th Street
New York, New York 10019

Dear Irv:

We showed the film on Shanghai yesterday to an interested audience of 25 or 30 specialists. I was very well impressed with the whole thing - it seems to me you got excellent pictures and your commentary had a great deal of balance and insight, including historical perspective such as one seldom is offered.

For example, I was glad that you got in the points about China's technical advancement in the fourteenth century, as well as the reference to the Opium War. It seemed to me you had some naturally good actors in the sessions with the family, with the revolutionary committee, with the dock worker, and the like. In short, I found very little to criticize.

Reflecting on the general situation in which we find ourselves, I am rather fatalistic. I think that inevitably the Chinese view of the media is quite different from ours. This goes back into all the imperial records that we have ever studied. The point of something in writing is to be positive, to represent the establishment of the time, and to help hold society together and keep authority in its place. This is quite the opposite of our view of the need to know anything that goes wrong, and the rights of the individual citizen to critical information. The result is that there is no solution to our cultural opposition on this subject, except a gradual wearing away on both sides. I don't think you could have done anything short of a Felix Green sort of job that could have avoided criticism.

The positive thing in your case is that you were trying to reach the American public with something intelligible. This, it seems to me, you accomplished very well.

We are very grateful for seeing the film, and we have sent it back to you. Many thanks.

Sincerely,

John K. Fairbank

JKF:bp

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